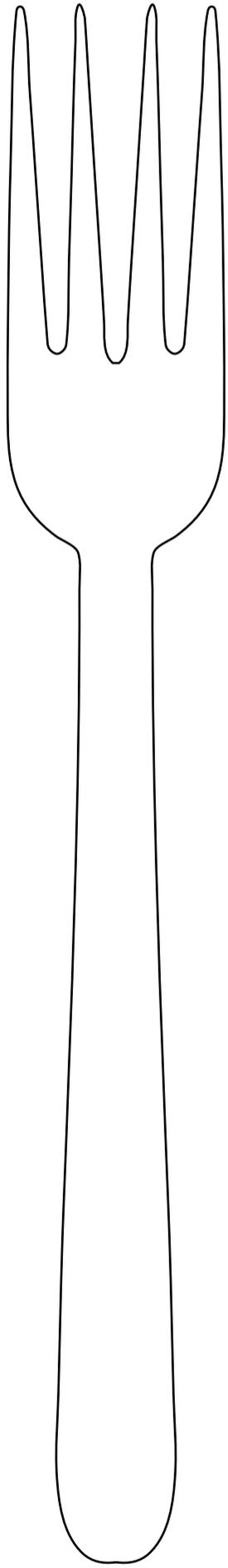


Dinner Conversation



what did you talk about in your last meal?

/// Dinner Conversation is set at a crossroads where the sheltered American Academy in Rome encounters the streets of its host city. It is where minds from around the world are passing, with a myriad of things, ideas, concerns and languages. As such it becomes a universal space.

Dinner Conversation explores the significance of a common place setting and its objects, as well as their interferences with spatiality: private vs. public, in static vs. dynamic circumstances—the fleeting moment of a meal. It is an instance of consumption rooted in cultivation, harvesting, economics and preparation—the expression of a life cycle whose duration is meant to relate concerns from the past with the emotive momentum that drives us into the near future. The meal and its topics are the basis for our very next day.

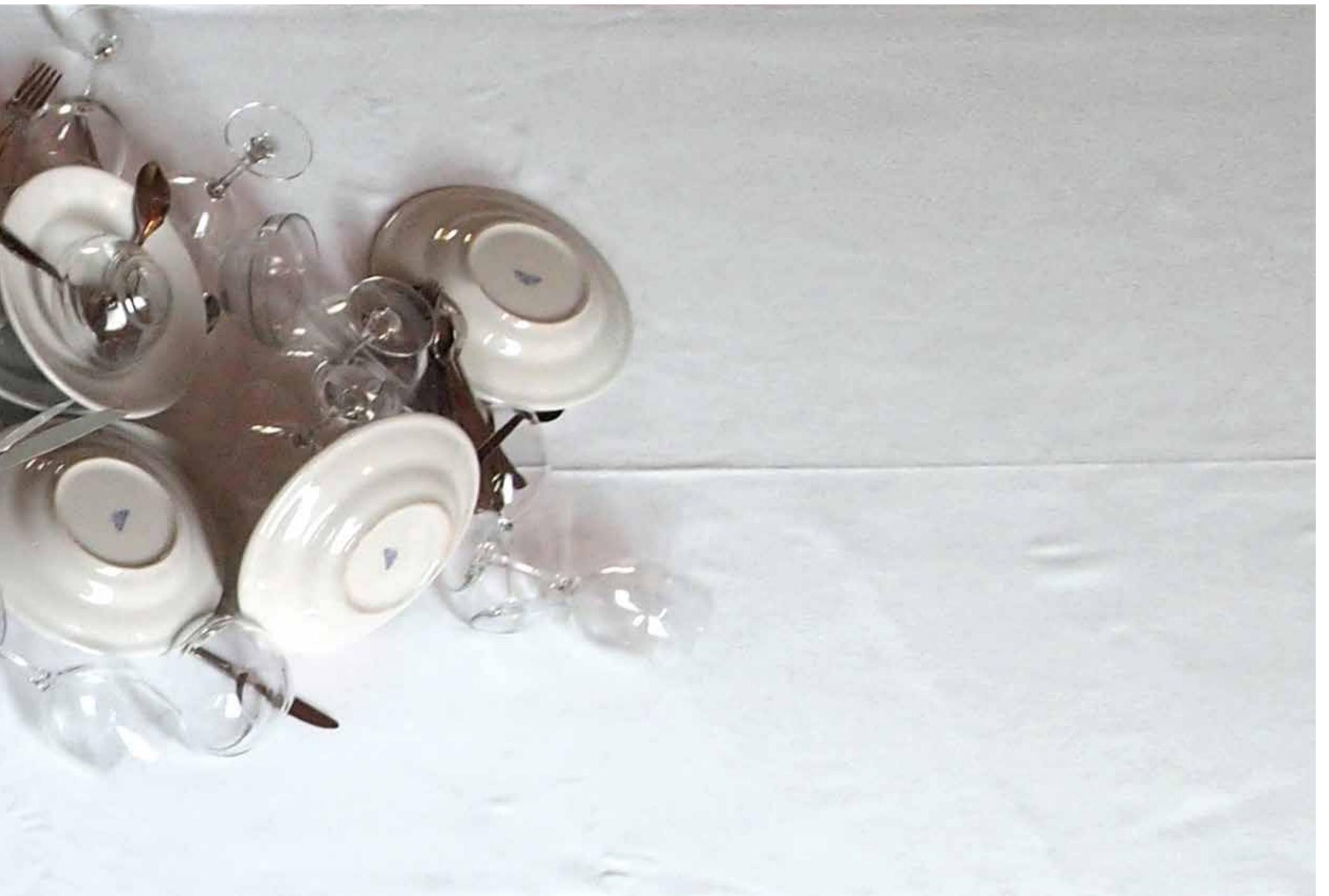
Dinner Conversation stages a meal by collectively scripting its dialogical dynamics. It does so not by associating table-set and dinner guest but by associating table-set item and conversation topic in a way that objectifies the latter. Each object then stands for a symbolic guest that invites all visitors to participate.

Dinner Conversation was inspired by the Rome Sustainable Food Project whose culture and values exemplify contemporary concerns of landscape, politics, experience design and art.

by Erik Adigard + Ross Altheimer dinnerconversation.org







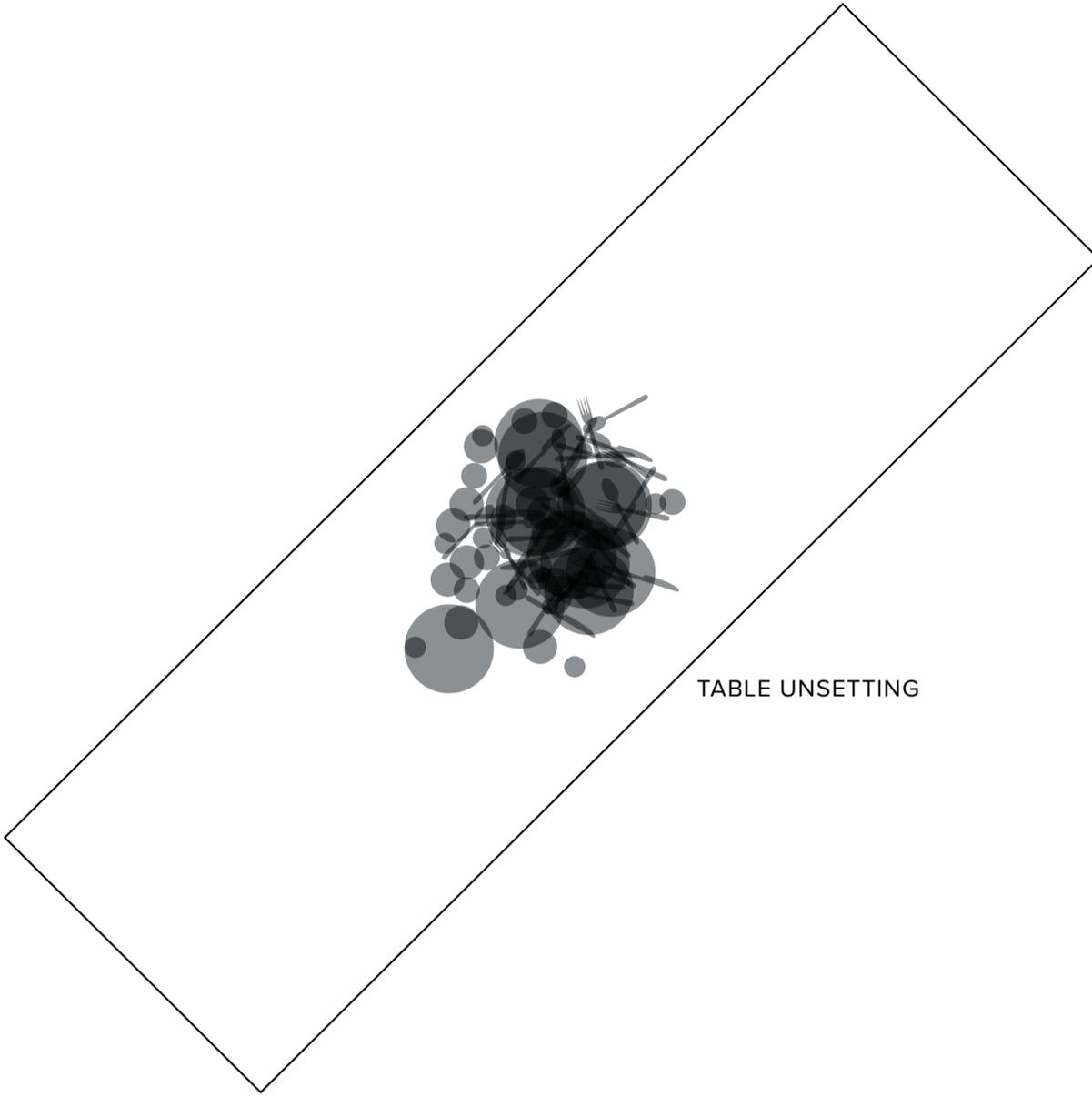
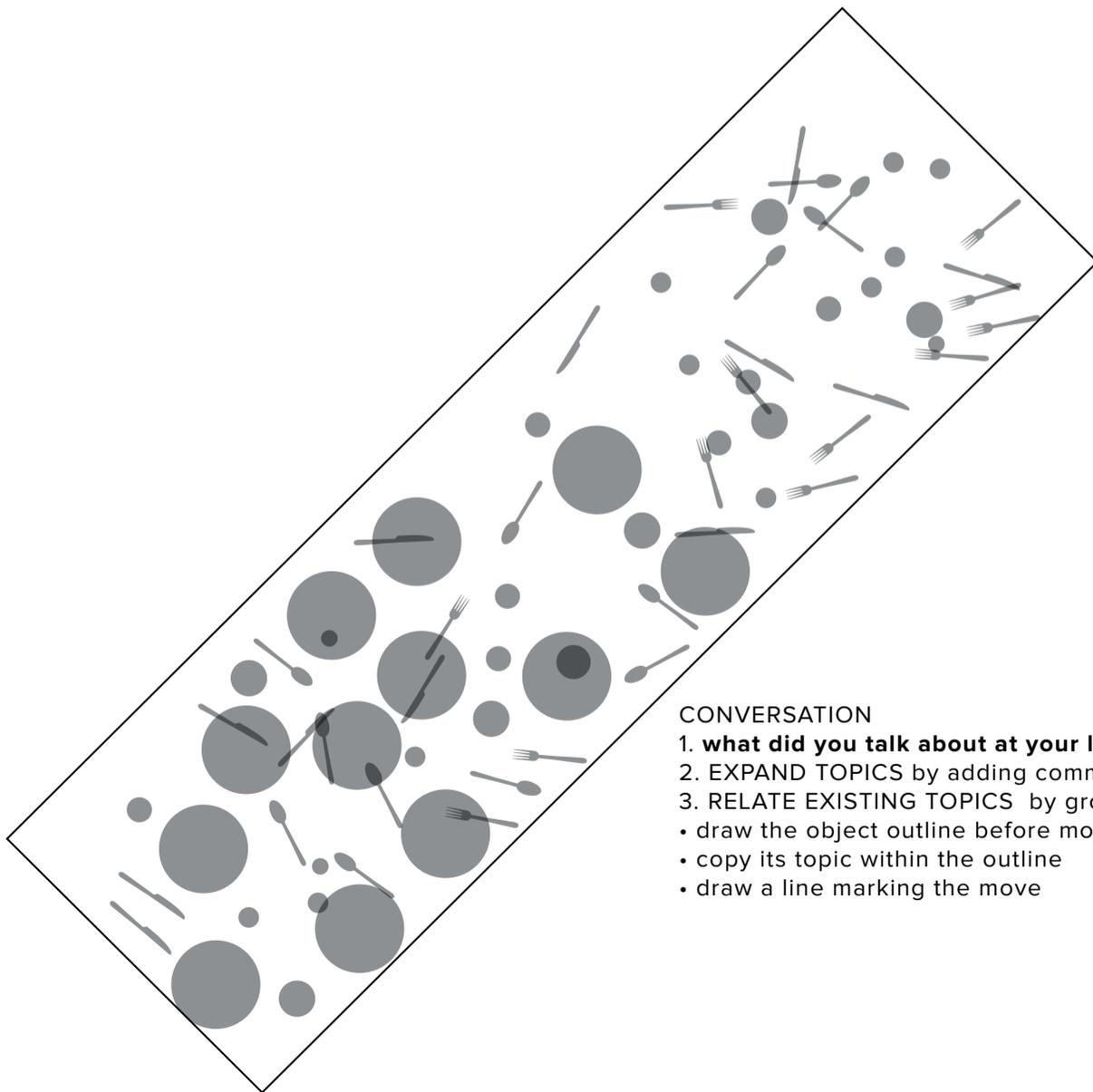


TABLE UNSETTING



CONVERSATION

1. **what did you talk about at your last meal?**
2. EXPAND TOPICS by adding comments on the objects.
3. RELATE EXISTING TOPICS by grouping objects:
 - draw the object outline before moving it
 - copy its topic within the outline
 - draw a line marking the move

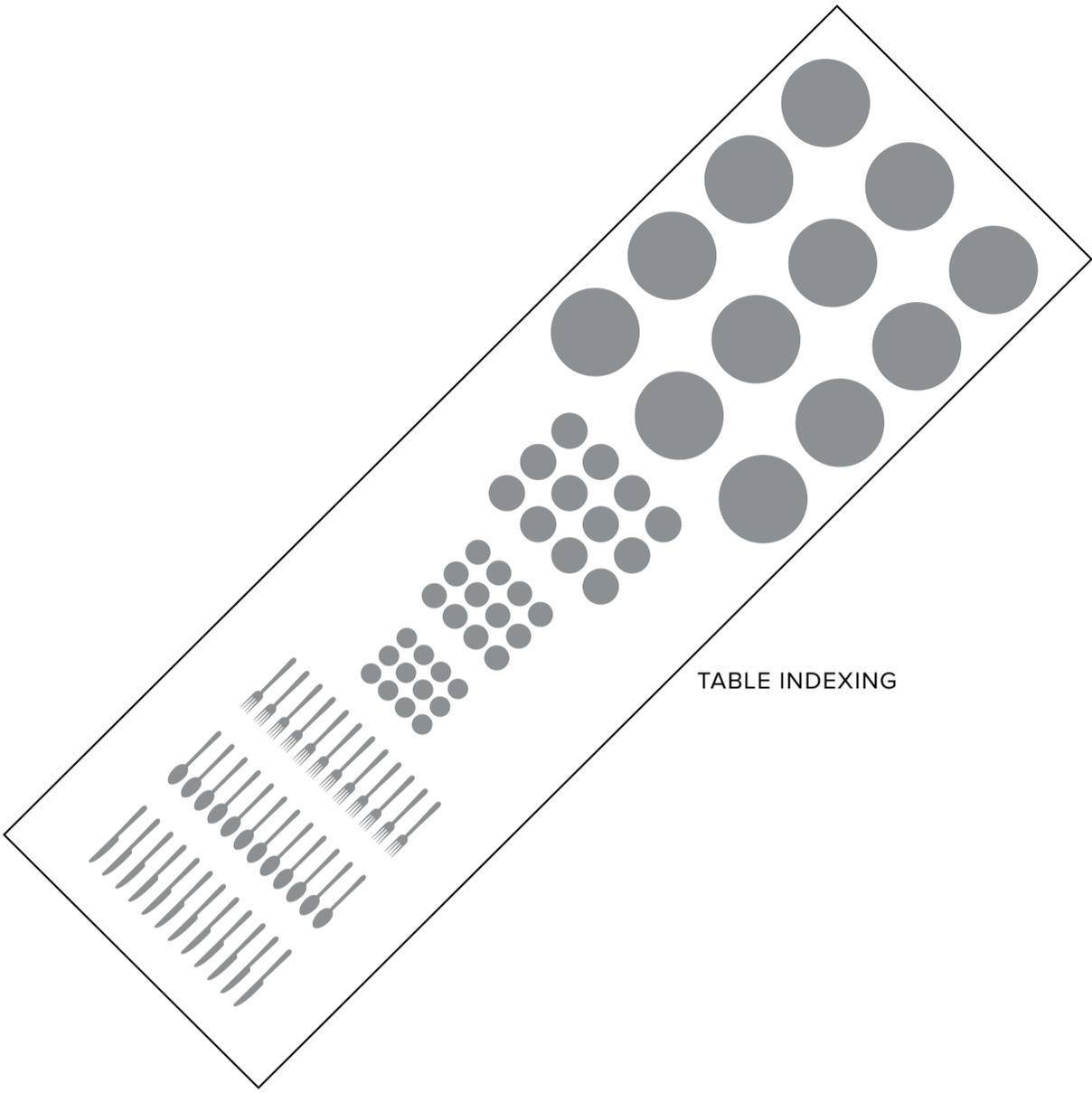


TABLE INDEXING

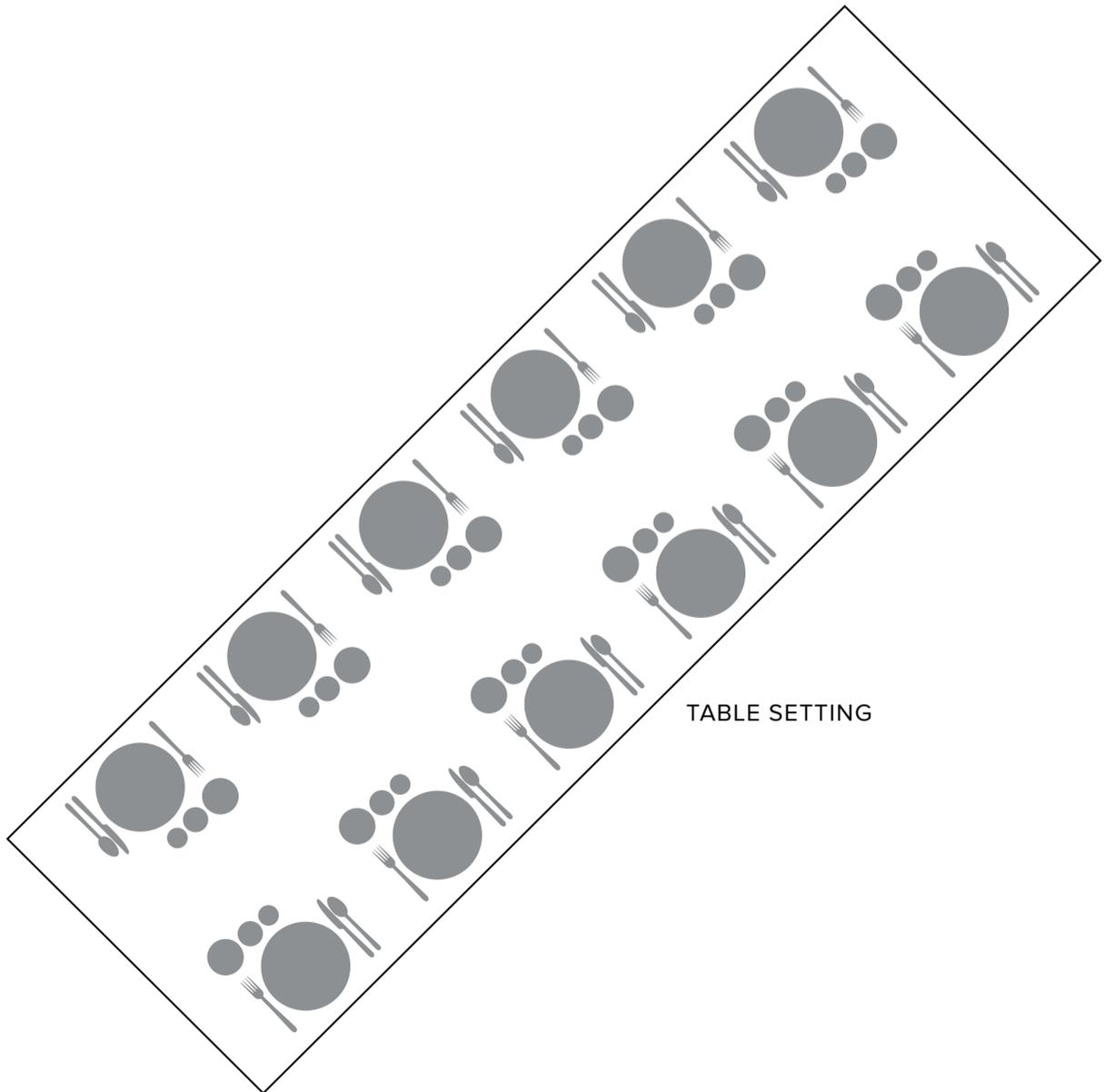


TABLE SETTING







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Randy, geographer/preservationist

I think the table is a microcosm of something much bigger. For me this is a model of culture that has been spatially and temporally compressed in this particular situation. If we see culture as a set of rules for living together, then you created a field in which we could see this play out. What I witnessed here were a set of rules that were formed in real time that morphed and shifted with innovative ideas being accepted and transgressive ones being thrown away.

Elisabeta, linguist

The fact that no food was eaten on this table is a paradox; would you ever use a dish to convey a message? This was a dialogue with a community from all different parts of the world, yet this is a strange conversation at the table. There are almost no sentences and very little syntax, only fixed expressions. This looks a lot like internet communication, linguistics does not have a model for explaining this way of communicating, we need to establish one.

Erik, experience designer

It is telling that the installation started as the very formal materiality of tablecloth, silverware, plates and glassware. The concern seemed to be about the elements, spatialities and boundaries of the table. Food was absent but there was a call for thoughts and words.

The setting was clearly intended as surfaces for language. Conversation was in the air and yet it ended on the



HAVE SEIT

NORMAN
FOSTER'S EX-TENSION TO THE
N.Y.P.L.
PLI

SAW IT... THE AWESOME WEIGHT & GRACE OF LEADERSHIP

AFIYET OLSUN!
Doğum günün kutlu olsun. Can Sinan!

GIORNO ARIO
COSA CH. ARIO

ANCH'OHIIIIL

When I had too out path I...

How good the food is!!

New Orleans

NOTE

LOV

RUSSIAN

ATIS
HIS
HOMELESSNESS

PUT. HERE
FIRE HERE

Thank

How nice

NIENTE E T



Betsy, strategist

Dinner conversation is a piece that explores the idea of hosting and engagement. In academic, business or civic settings, learning is supposed to happen through formal lectures, meetings and structured processes, but in reality most of the breakthrough and collaborative learning happens informally. At a meal, on a walk or over coffee. How do you show these exchanges? How do you begin to map where ideas pass from one person to another, get expanded upon or changed? How do you take a snapshot of exchange within a group of people in a time-based experience? Is it even possible? Dinner Conversation is an interesting conceptual experiment in how we might track heuristic learning in a digital world and collaborative learning in this social era.

Patrick, historian

In archeology and history we never know if what we find is authentic or if it's been affected by previous generations. It often comes to us with many unknowns. And here, we see a lot of words and expressions but we don't know where it comes from. It doesn't tell us much about who was at that table and what they were really thinking.

Ross, landscape architect

I am less interested in what people were saying or thinking and more interested in the table as a model of public space. What happens when a space is given over to the public, what rules are created or broken? I also like the idea of decoding and recoding familiar objects and rituals in new ways. I still want to write on my bowl and stack a plate on a cup as a matter of defiance of our normative rules for table behaviour.

///

The takeaway: when we started this creative experiment to bring the American Academy's community and the city of Rome into one open-ended conversation, we prepared ourselves for few outcomes.

At best, we assumed, we would expose and express the wealth of culture that is shared by the Academy and its host city which is known as the cradle of civilization and has been AAR's inspiration for a century. That would express our shared passion for the intellectual values, passion for history and love of culture that we encounter here every day. It would also tell of our drive for more discoveries and better understanding. At worst, our invitation would be ignored and nothing would come out of it. And in between we would yield a random mix of platitudes.

But what we got was a contrast to our project's framework, and beyond the unexpected: a frenzied conversation where all spoke above all and no one could be heard.

Unpredictable is perhaps the way we truly are. We belong to focused institutions, like AAR. We nurture education and deep silos of knowledge and we still see Rome as the monumental empire that it used to be. Had our choice of crossroads for a conversation outlived its times? Rome is mostly buried and in ruins. But ruins is what we seek, possibly as an expression of what it means to be human in times of post-humanity. This form of poetry is what we could find on the remnants of *Dinner Conversation*, or should we call it *Dinner Exhibitionism*, for a conversation orgy that may in its rambling have revealed more about its participants than any dinner could have achieved, and to some may have seemed like a momentary revolution in the restrained atmosphere of the Cortile. ///



JUST Sing From Your Heart
What To Do About
The Voice of Love
ANTINFIAMMATORIO
Pur Traces are
to be found

WHAT TIME
DO YOU HAVE
TO GET UP
TOMORROW
LINDA H
FUTURE IS SOME
TO CALM
THE

ROOSEVELT
VIVA FIDEL
RUBIN
DUBI
COEN
EXHIBITIONISM
CAT
BLUE
CAT

SAW IT -
AWESOME THE
WEIGHT & COLOR
OF LEADERSHIP
TOP 10
MOVES

Grand Tour
Jandora
The winner of the 4
I'll send you the
the last of
the
Mountain
Lion
a new slot 14
this in!

Yummy
I was born in
I have a
Yummy
CUI MOM
CONOSCE HON
MA RICORDI
DEATH
VIVA FIDEL
RUBIN
MA RICORDI
DEATH
MA RICORDI
DEATH
MA RICORDI
DEATH

THIS IS JUST
TO SAY...

ANCHE
NO!

ART IV KID
LAKE ARMSTRONG

MA RICORDI
DEATH

What did you talk about in your last meal?

